

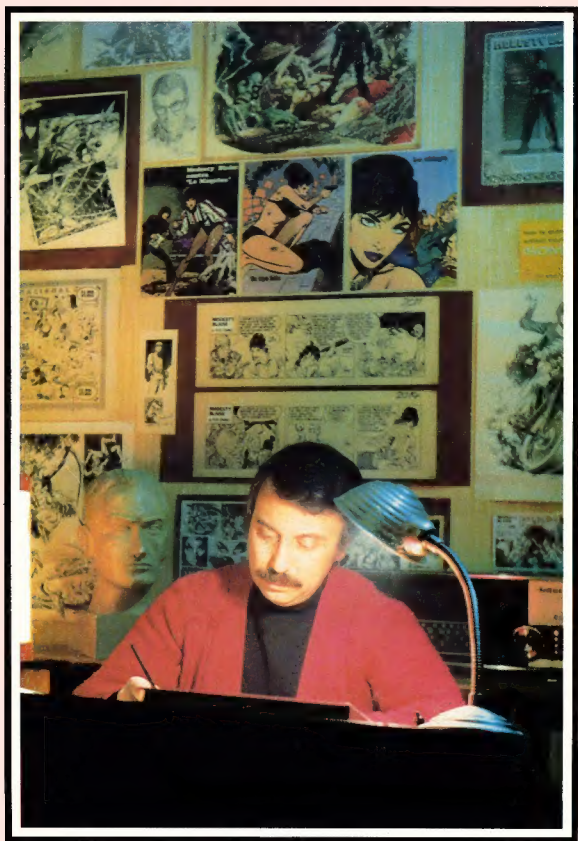
FIRST AMERICAN EDITION SERIES

AXA 3

by AVENELL
& Romero



Introduction by C.C. Beck



Enrique Romero

FIRST AMERICAN EDITION SERIES

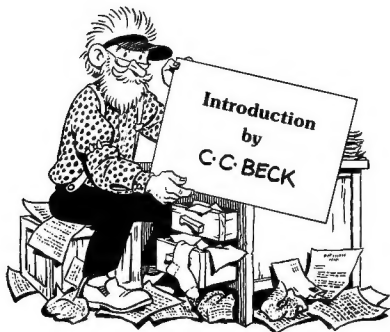
AXA 3

by Donne Avenell and Enrique Romero



- **THE BRAVE** •
- **THE GAMBLER** •

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People who know me from my editorials* are aware that I am constantly pointing out that today's comic books are degenerate, perverted and depraved.

When I use these terms I do not mean that today's comic books present stories about degenerate people, sexual perverts or depraved monsters. I am attacking the art in today's comics, which to me is degenerate—that is, it has gone from the original simple, abstract, cartoon-like style used by comic artists of the early part of the century to a realistic, over-ornate, boring

style reminiscent of the work done by artists in the baroque and rococo periods of history.

I find the comic books of today perverted because they have turned away from down-to-earth, everyday characters and feature only godlike heroes and heroines in epic-style stories that went out of style at about the end of the Middle Ages.

Worst of all, today's comic books have absolutely no humor in them. Everybody is as stern-faced and rigid in attitude as the religious fanatics who went around "saving the world" by

*C. C. Beck is editor of the *Fawcett Collectors of America (FCA/SOB) Newsletter*. In 1940 Beck co-created the famous comic book character *Captain Marvel*. He was the chief *Captain Marvel* artist for over a decade, producing all the artwork from his own studios.

burning old ladies, torturing heretics and slaughtering thousands of innocent people some centuries ago.

Why, then, am I writing an introduction to the third volume of Axa? Simply because the art in Axa is *not* like the art in comic books. It is in comic strip form—simple, square panels in sequence. There are no huge, oddly shaped panels, no trick layouts, no attempts to dazzle the reader with eye-catching displays of technique.

The composition of each panel is kept simple and is tied in with the preceding and following panels, making the strip easy to read. This I admire. Tight control over one's medium is always admirable; far too many artists let their pictures get out of hand and run amuck.

I have been accused of over simplification in my own early *Captain Marvel* work which many regard as crude and primitive. It is. But so was *Popeye*—and what could be cruder and simpler than today's highly successful *Peanuts* and *Garfield*?

It was the daily strips of the thirties that I was trying to emulate in *Captain Marvel*. Daily strips have always been story-telling sequences, not overblown displays of technique and layout more suitable to posters and advertisements. Axa is, of course, a daily strip and these books are simply reprints of the stories as they first appeared in British newspapers.

As to the nudity and sex and degenerate morals (and hideous mutants, giant crabs, horrible old men, and worse) in Axa, I find them all delightful. Alex Raymond's great fault was that he could never draw anything ugly. Enrique Romero* can. And, unlike *Popeye*'s creator, Segar, who could never draw anything beautiful, Romero draws a beautiful Axa!

As sexy as Axa is, she's always innocently so. Walter Gibson (writer of *The Shadow*) once pointed out to me that a picture of a girl with her skirt up in the air accidentally is sexy but that a picture of a girl holding her skirt up is disgusting. Axa is not pornographic. Sex is always suggested, not explicit. Explicit sex is about as interesting as a doctor's textbook, in my opinion.

The story line and the setting of the Axa strip, is plain old post-holocaust science fiction. This sort of doomsday plot went out of style many years ago. But the public has always been at least thirty years behind the science fiction writers, so I can understand the appeal to today's readers (and to me).

While the producers of today's comic books, like those of the golden age, aim their products at boys of perhaps ten or twelve years of age or younger, Axa is *not* for pre-pubescent readers. It's for boys of fourteen and up—up to whenever males lose their interest in pretty girls. Not only is Axa well developed, but the men ain't bad-looking either. Something for everybody!

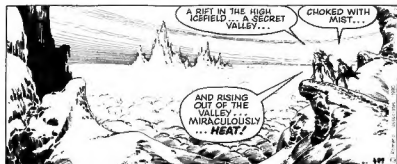
In the Axa art there are shadows and modeling, but only when these ingredients contribute to the story line. Comic art, in my opinion, should be line art, not fake halftone art. Enrique Romero never gives us a tricky display of chiaroscuro by throwing all sorts of shadows across things and "playing around with his blacks" as so many comic book illustrators are fond of doing. The art is always just sufficient—never in excess.

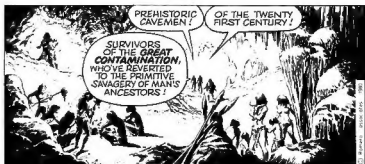
Above all, Axa is believable. She has no x-ray vision, she doesn't fly around like Peter Pan, she doesn't pull up continents and divert colliding galaxies. She is just an innocent little girl, and I love her!

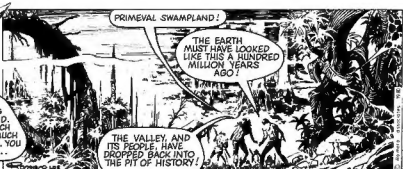
*Enrique Romero (see outside back cover) was born in Barcelona, Spain in 1930. At age 15 he began his first professional assignments. Upon the untimely death of Jim Holdaway he took over *Modesty Blaise* in 1970. In 1978 he moved to his own strip: *Axa*.

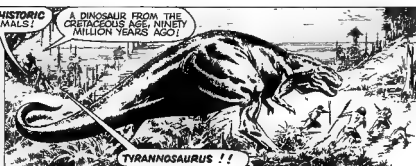




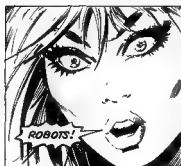
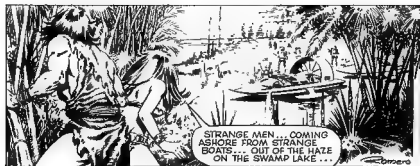






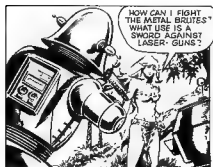
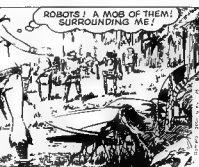


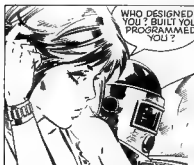
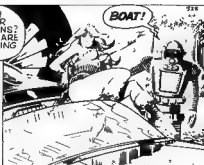
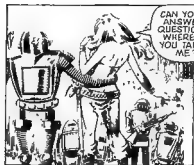
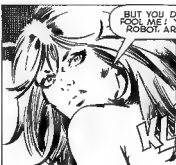










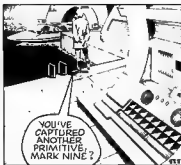


A CITY IN THE SWAMP!

AXA TAKEN TO THE CITY OF THE ROBOTS...



MEN MUST HAVE BUILT THIS TOWER BLOCK... THE MEN BEHIND THE MACHINES.



YOU'VE CAPTURED ANOTHER PRIMITIVE, MARK NINE?



IF YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT ME... I'M AS CIVILISED AS YOU ARE...



FROM THE SOUTH... A DOWED CITY, OVER THE SEA...

YOU'RE A STRANGER IN THE VALLEY?



YOU'RE A SCIENTIST, TOO?

NO. I DON'T BUILD ROBOTS. I JUST GET KIDNAPPED BY THEM



SORRY ABOUT THAT. VIDEO-ANALYSIS CIRCUITS ARE TRICKY TO INSTALL... AND WE DON'T HAVE MUCH CALL FOR THEM IN THE VALLEY...



THIS IS WHERE YOU BUILD THE ROBOTS?

YES... WE'VE DEVELOPED A WIDE RANGE OF TYPES...



THE EARLY ONES WERE CRUDE, OF COURSE... BUT I'M WORKING ON ONE NOW THAT'S ALMOST HUMAN...

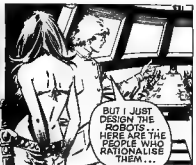


ALMOST?



YOU'VE SEEN THE VALLEY OUT THERE. THE BLIND CHAOS OF EVOLUTION. IT COULD DO WITH A NUDGE IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION, DON'T YOU THINK?

BUT WHAT'S THE POINT OF IT ALL? WHAT ARE YOU BUILDING THIS COMMUNITY OF ROBOTS FOR?



BUT I JUST DESIGN THE ROBOTS. HERE ARE THE PEOPLE WHO RATIONALISE THEM...



WE HAVE A VISITOR, SIR. A STRANGER TO THE VALLEY. NOT ONE OF THE PRIMITIVES...



IF YOU PUT THE QUESTION TO ME, YOU MIGHT FIND OUT!



SP-RT, EH? AND BEAUTY! EXCELLENT!



WE'VE BEEN HOPING TO FIND A PERSON LIKE YOU, MY DEAR, FOR A LONG TIME...



I'LL ACTIVATE MARK TEN, DOCTOR... WE MAY NEED HIM...



WHO ARE YOU ALL? WHAT IS THIS CITY OF YOURS DOING IN THE SWAMP? WHAT DO YOU WANT OF ME?



NATURALLY YOU ARE CURIOUS ABOUT US, MY DEAR. LET ME ANSWER YOUR QUESTIONS...



AFTER THE GREAT CONTAMINATION, A GROUP OF ENLIGHTENED MEN FOUND REFUGE IN THIS VALLEY... AND BUILT THEMSELVES A LABORATORY COMPLEX...



THE CLIMATE WAS TEMPERATE THEN... BUT NUCLEAR DISTURBANCE MAY HAVE FLAWED THE EARTH'S CRUST BELOW THE VALLEY...



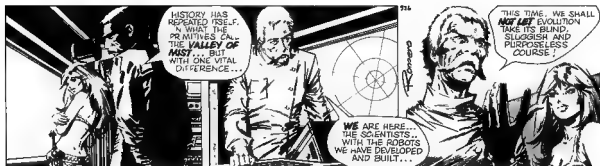
VOLCANIC HEAT RAISED THE TEMPERATURE IN THE VALLEY... AND TURNED IT INTO A SWEETENING PRIMEVAL SWAMP...



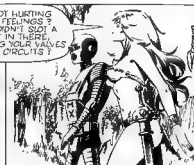
WHETHER THEY OR THEIR ENABRIS HAD BEEN HIBERNATING HERE SINCE THE LAST ICE AGE, MILLIONS OF YEARS AGO, WE DON'T KNOW...



...BUT SOON THE DINOSAURS APPEARED AND PRIMITIVE MEN FROM THE OUTSIDE WORLD TO HUNT AND BE HUNTED BY THEM...







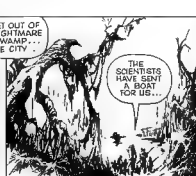
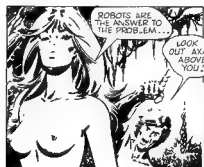


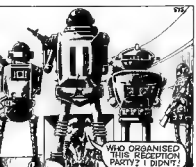


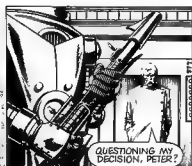


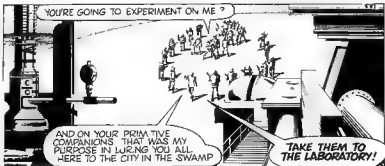


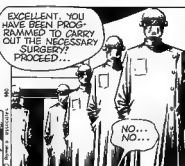
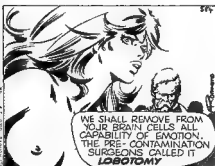






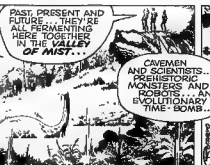
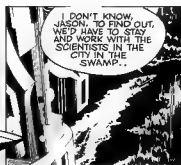


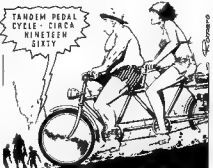




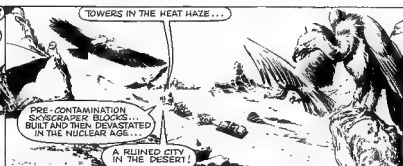
























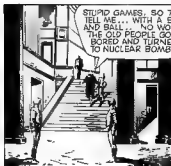


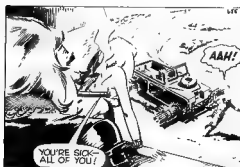
AXA MEETS THE BOSS OF THE GAMBLING CITY IN THE DESERT...













LAST ONE,
STEVE... I NISH
HIM OFF!



HELL YES! WE DON'T
SELL THE SPECTATORS SHORT
IN THE **GAMES PARK!**



WHAT,
THEN?











